

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original): Furnace (22) for heating a preform (10), especially a plastic container preform, which comprises a longitudinal heating tunnel (24) bounded transversely by the mutually parallel longitudinal vertical internal faces (36, 38) of two walls (40, 42), one a heating wall (40), being equipped with a heating system (46), and the other an aerated wall (42), having aeration orifices (50) that are intended to let the air blown by a blower (52) pass through them transversely from the upstream, outside the heating tunnel (24), to the downstream, inside the latter, and in which furnace a first portion (12, 14) of the preform (10) is heated in the heating tunnel (24), while a second portion (16) of the preform (10) is held outside the heating tunnel (24) through a longitudinal opening (41) made between the longitudinal edges of the walls (36, 38) of the heating tunnel (24), the blower (52) comprising two independent fans (54a, 54b) that deliver air transversely to the aerated wall (42) and to the second portion (16) of the preform (10) respectively, so as to keep the constituent material of this second portion (16) of the preform (10) at a temperature below its softening point, characterized in that the blower (52) includes two separate air delivery ducts (60a, 60b) that are adjacent and each associated with a fan (54a, 54b).

2. (currently amended): Furnace (22) according to ~~the preceding~~ claim 1, characterized in that the delivery

ducts (60a, 60b) are formed by the upper and lower compartments of a common box (66) having a dividing partition (68).

3. (currently amended): Furnace according to ~~either of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, characterized in that the blower (52) includes two separate air inlet ducts (58a, 58b) that are each associated with a fan (54a, 54b).

4. (currently amended): Furnace (22) according to ~~the preceding claim 3~~, characterized in that the blower (52) includes two coaxial vertical shafts (64a, 64b), each driving an associated fan (54a, 54b).

5. (currently amended): Furnace (22) according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, characterized in that the speed of the air stream expelled by the fan (54a) associated with the aerated wall (42) is controlled by a control device.

6. (currently amended): Furnace (22) according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, characterized in that the fans (54a, 54b) are controlled by two separate control units.

7. (new): Furnace according to claim 2, characterized in that the blower (52) includes two separate air inlet ducts (58a, 58b) that are each associated with a fan (54a, 54b).